

# DFEH News Brief

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## **CITRUS HEIGHTS APARTMENT COMPLEX PAYS \$70,000 TO SETTLE DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION SUIT FILED BY THE DFEH**

**ELK GROVE, CA** -- The California Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) today announced the \$70,000 out-of-court settlement of a housing discrimination case against a Citrus Heights, CA, apartment complex.

The owners and managers of the Stonegate Apartments on Mariposa Avenue in Citrus Heights were accused of refusing to provide a ground floor unit to a tenant with an injury-related mobility disability. Although she originally resided in a ground floor unit, Belinda Wright, her husband, and their four children were forced to relocate to a second-story unit after their ground floor unit flooded and was made uninhabitable by water and mold damage.

Since becoming disabled in July 2003, Mrs. Wright needs a cane or walker to walk on flat, even surfaces and suffers from chronic leg and back pain. Because walking up and down stairs exacerbates her pain, Mrs. Wright's neurologist recommended a ground floor unit as a reasonable accommodation for her disability. The ground floor unit was especially needed for Mrs. Wright because her building did not have an elevator.

Claiming there was no reason to suspect that she had a disability necessitating a ground floor apartment, even though the maintenance supervisor had once carried Mrs. Wright up the stairs and saw that she was in a wheelchair on at least one occasion, Stonegate refused to transfer Mrs. Wright to one of the several ground floor units that had become available during the relevant period.

"The Fair Employment & Housing Act (FEHA) is groundbreaking in that it guarantees access to fair housing for all Californians," said Governor Schwarzenegger's Secretary of State & Consumer Services, Rosario Marin. "As evidenced by this latest case, the FEHA is still very much relevant and critical to the protection of our state's residents."

As part of the \$70,000 out-of-court settlement, the owners also agreed to attend fair housing training, develop and maintain a reasonable accommodation policy, and display posters informing tenants of their right to report concerns regarding discrimination to the department. In settling the case, the owners of the apartment complex did not admit liability.

"This case is yet another example of why California's Fair Employment & Housing Act is so essential to all Californians. Anyone can suffer a disabling injury today that tomorrow can require a reasonable accommodation in employment or housing," said DFEH Director Phyllis Cheng.

The mission of the DFEH is to protect the people of California from unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and from hate violence. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.dfeh.ca.gov](http://www.dfeh.ca.gov).

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